

TREATMENT OF SCOTTISH HISTORY

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M'Ean of Glencoe and that trybe can be well separated from the rest, it will be a proper vindication of the public justice to extirpate that sect of thieves/ These orders, evidently drafted by Stair, do not sanction either treachery or breach of faith, and it is improbable that all the details of the affair were known to William.¹ Stair decided with promptitude that a distinction could be made between the Maclans and the rest, and ordered the extirpation to be effected. When subsequent inquiry revealed the details, William, as we have seen, condoned the massacre and pardoned Stair. He treated Stair's act as an error? not as a crime, and? regarding Highland thieves as * two-footed wolves ', was not much moved by their fate.² The extirpation by fire and sword of a turbulent and intractable clan was no new thing in Scottish history : the novelty was that it excited so much popular indignation amongst Lowlanders. This was not entirely due to humanity : opponents of the government seized the opportunity to discredit it, and the enemies or rivals of the Secretary utilised it to overthrow him.³ One of these rivals was Stair's colleague., Secretary Johnstone, who had succeeded Melville about the end of 1691. James Johnstone was the son of Sir Archibald Johnstone of Warriston. His cousin, Burnet, described him

as a man of ' a very good understanding, and a great dexterity in managing business/ and also ⁱ of an entire virtue". He adds that though his descent obliged him ' to espouse the Presbyterian interests', yet he had ' none of their narrow notions⁵, and was even a little ^f too loose as to the

¹Mr. Paget considers that ' no reasonable doubt can be entertained ¹ that William knew that Glencoe had taken *the* oath (pp. 55-7). The evidence he adduces does not prove the point.

²The phrase was used by William in conversation with Breadalbane.

Story, Carstares, p. 218.

³**See Brown**, History of Scotland, iii. 16-17.